

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, IZ

SUBJECT: US-IRAQ ISSUES (V): FALLING BACK ON THE STATUS QUO

REF: A) BAGHDAD 898

B) BAGHDAD 900

C) BAGHDAD 919

D) BAGHDAD 920

1. SUMMARY: IF NO PROGRESS IS MADE AT THE PROPOSED UNGA CONTACT, WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE STATUS QUO IN BILATERAL RELATIONS UPON WHICH WE FALL BACK? IT IS MUCH BETTER THAN OCTOBER 1972 WHEN US DIPLOMATS RETURNED TO BAGHDAD. BUT IT IS LIMITED TO ECONOMIC AND CONSULAR AFFAIRS. IT IS PROBABLE THAT ANTI-AMERICAN PROPAGANDA WOULD GROW LOUDER AND MORE TEDIOUS BUT THIS WOULD PROBABLY NOT DAMPEN THE ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP. END SUMMARY.

2. IT IS OBVIOUSLY ALL TOO POSSIBLE THAT PROPOSED UNGA CONTACT BETWEEN SECRETARY AND GOI FOREIGN MINISTER WILL NOT YIELD BREAK THROUGH ON THE FOUR ISSUES ADDRESSED IN REFTELS: PALESTINE, ARMS, OIL AND THE SINAI. THE RESULT WOULD BE A
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FALLBACK UPON THE STATUS QUO WITH POSSIBILITY OF EITHER

LIMITED DETERIORATION OR LIMITED IMPROVEMENT IN OUR CURRENTLY RESTRICTED BILATERAL RELATIONS.

3. IT MAY BE USEFUL TO CONTRAST THE ELEMENTS OF THE STATUS QUO IN 1975 WITH WHAT IT WAS IN OCTOBER 1972 WHEN THE FIRST US DIPLOMATS RETURNED TO BAGHDAD. IN 1972 AND FOR SOME MONTHS TO COME, THE USINT OFFICERS WERE SUBJECTED TO MASSIVE POLICE SURVEILLANCE AND ACCESS TO GOIN OFFICIALDOM WAS, FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES, RESTRICTED TO ONE MIDDLE GRADE OFFICER OF THE MFA. AT ONE STAGE THE WEEKLY EXCHANGE OF CLASSIFIED POUCHES WITH THE COURIER AT BAGHDAD AIRPORT TRANSIT LOUNGE WAS ELABORATELY FILMED AND VIDEOTAPED BY SECURITY POLICE. BEGINNING WITH THE SUMMER OF 1973, HOWEVER, AND THE PRAGMATIC OPENING UP OF THE IRAQI ECONOMY TO THE WEST, USINT BEGAN TO HAVE GREATER ACCESS TO BUREAUCRACY. NOW WE CAN SEE ANY DIRECTOR GENERAL IN ANY MINISTRY WITH LITTLE OR NO DIFFICULTY. GIVEN THE EXCELLENT INTERNAL, VERTICAL FLOW OF INFORMATION (AT LEAST IN THE ECONOMIC MINISTRIES), THAT IS ALL THE ACCESS WE NEED.

4. AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN ARE POURING INTO BAGHDAD, WITH THE PACE QUICKENING ALL THE TIME. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE IN A POSITION TO KNOW, AFTER THE RECENT STATE OF MISSISSIPPI TRADE MISSION, THE SECRET POLICE WERE ORDERED TO CEASE SHADOWING ALL AMERICAN VISITORS WITHOUT EXCEPTION (AS THEY HAD BEEN) AND TO BEGIN TAILING ONLY THOSE WHOM THEY HAD POSITIVE REASON TO SUSPECT. BY MARCH OF 1976, WHEN MUCH OF THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR'S FUNDS WILL HAVE BEEN OBLIGATED BY THE GOI, THERE WILL PROBABLY BE UP TO 20 AMERICAN CONTRACTING FIRMS RESIDENT IN IRAQ, WITH PERHAPS 400 OR 500 AMERICANS EMPLOYED BY THE COMPANIES.

5. BY JULY 1976, USINT WILL HAVE BEEN FORCED TO MOVE FROM ITS PRESENT LOCATION BY EXPIRY OF OUR LEASE. SINCE ONLY TWO OR THREE FSO'S NOW IN WASHINGTON HAVE SEEN THESE PREMISES, IT IS NECESSARY TO UNDERLINE THE ABSOLUTE UNSUITABILITY OF WHAT WAS BUILT AS A TEN ROOM RESIDENCE TO SERVE AS A US DIPLOMATIC OFFICE IN THE CURRENT AND ERMING STATUS QUO. FOR WE ARE NOW ISSUING 300-500 VISAS PER MONTH, RECEIVING CALLS FROM 30-60 U.S. BUSINESSMEN PER MONTH AND FROM VISITING USG OFFICERS EVERY

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SECOND MONTH. AND WE HAVE FOUR STATES PLANNING TO SEND TRADE MISSIONS. WE COULD NOT FIND OFFICE SPACE FOR EVEN ONE MORE AMERICAN IN OUR CURRENT PREMISES.

6. IN THE PRESUMPTIVE STATUS QUO WHICH WOULD EMERGE AFTER LACK OF PROGRESS AT THE UNGA MEETING, BILATERAL TRADING AND OTHER ECONOMIC RELATIONS WILL REMAIN AND INTENSIFY. THE NUMBER OF IRAQ VISITORS TO THE US WILL CONTINUE TO GROW. BUT

IF THE USSR, SYRIA AND IRAQ DIG IN THEIR HEELS AGAINST THE SINAI SETTLEMENT AND ACTIVELY SUPPORT THE MORE EXTREME PALESTINIAN DEMANDS, THE ALREADY TEDIOUS VOLUME OF DAILY ANTI-AMERICAN PROPAGANDA WILL SWELL. IN SUCH AN ATMOSPHERE THERE ARE NO OBVIOUS DEVICES WHICH WE CAN SUGGEST OR EMPLOY FOR MARGINAL IMPROVEMENT OF THE STATUS QUO. THE GOI BADLY NEEDS EXPERTISE ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE TRAINING AND CURRICULUM FORMATION AND THE BRITISH COUNCIL REGULARLY TURNS AWAY HUNDREDS OF APPLICANTS FOR STUDY OF ENGLISH--IRAQ'S DIPLOMATIC AND INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE PAR EXCELLENCE. WE COULD BE VERY HELPFUL IN THIS AREA IF IRAQ WERE WILLING TO ACCEPT OUR HELP. AND IT IS AN AREA WHICH WE MIGHT WELL PROBE. BUT APART FROM THIS, IT IS HARD TO SEE OTHER NEW AREAS IN WHICH WE CAN HOPE FOR MARGINAL IMPROVEMENT. USG-SPONSORED CULTURAL EVENTS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. US PARTICIPATION IN THE BAGHDAD INTERNATIONAL FAIR WILL NOT BE PERMITTED. THE MFA HAS BEEN LUKE-WARM AT BEST IN RESPONDING TO OUR OVERTURES FOR TECHNICAL TALKS ON ENERGY.

7. IN SHORT, FAILURE TO MOVE FORWARD AT UNGA WILL LEAVE US WITH A WORKABLE STATUS QUO WITH VERY LITTLE LIKELIHOOD OF MARKED QUALITATIVE IMPROVEMENT. IT IS A STATUS QUO, HOWEVER, TO WHICH BOTH SIDES HAVE GROWN ACCUSTOMED AND WHICH HAS ELEMENTS OF ADVANTAGE TO BOTH OF US.
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